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## West Contra Costa likely to spare adult ed from painful cuts

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Adult education in West Contra Costa likely will be spared major cuts next year, barring any more bad news from Sacramento.

District staff told the school board and the community Wednesday night that they were able to trim the program's budget without significantly slashing classes.

"It's almost miraculous," board President Madeline Kronenberg said. "This board and (Superintendent Bruce) Harter prioritized adult education."

The program will have a \$2.7 million budget next year while avoiding registration fees and keeping core programs such as English as a Second Language, citizenship and high school equivalency classes; programming for seniors and adults with disabilities, such as senior centers and computer classes; and fee-based courses geared toward employability, such as welding, nursing, and food and safety; as well as community-interest classes such as cooking and crafts.

Bringing adult education's overall budget down from \$3.8 million without eliminating programming

meant cutting back in other, less-painful ways. For one, the district is considering larger class sizes and decreasing the number of classes offered, particularly those that don't fill up with students. And, the district will be reorganizing its administration, clerical and accounting staff — with jobs reduced only through attrition.

The plan assumes, of course, that no more major cuts will be handed down from state officials in the coming months.

With Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's revision to the state's budget expected today, things could still change.

"Everything hinges on the May revise," said Sheri Gamba, the district's associate superintendent for business services. "If things get much worse, we might have to go back to the table and figure out what we can do."

Even if the state budget doesn't hold more surprises, adult education's future is still unclear beyond next year.

"I keep hoping to hear that the financial trends are improving or at least remaining stable," Gamba said. "That's what we're all hoping for right now — some stability and consistency in our funding."

Shelly Meron covers education in West Contra Costa. Follow her at [Twitter.com/shellymeron](https://twitter.com/shellymeron).

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